

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 NSC-05 OMB-01 SAM-01 EB-07 /074 W

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R 021739Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5110

SECDEF

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

HQ 3AF RAF MILDENHALL

CSAF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 13883

DEFENSE FOR ASD/PA AND SAFOI

MADRID PASS JUSMAAG

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MILI, MPOL, UK, GW, SP

SUBJ: KC-L35 BUILDUP ANNOUNCEMENT

REF: SECDEF 5234 DTG 211913Z AUG 76

1. WILBERFORCE, HEAD, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT, FCO, CALLED IN EMBOFF TODAY TO DISCUSS KC-135 TANKER BUILD-UP MATTER. WILBERFORCE STRESSED THAT APRIL CLEARANCE MOD GAVE TO HQ 3AF, RAF MILDENHALL, FOR DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL TANKERS WAS DONE IN CONTEXT OF HMG UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WOULD BE NO, REPEAT NO, PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT.

2. WILBERFORCE SAID HE MUST ASK US TO ACCEPT "GREAT DIFFICULTY" HMG WOULD HAVE WITH A PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT AND FCO BELIEVES THAT A "DEFENSIVE PRESS BRIEF" ALONG THE LINES

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BELOW SHOULD SERVE OUR MUTUAL PURPOSES AND INTERESTS.

"DEFENSIVE PRESS BRIEF

"IF ASKED ABOUT THE REDEPLOYMENT, THE PRESS OFFICER WOULD SAY:

'THERE IS TO BE A FURTHER DEPLOYMENT OF KC-135 TANKER REFUELLING AIRCRAFT TO RAF MILDENHALL, NORFOLK TO SUPPORT THOSE AIRCRAFT ALREADY THERE. THEY FORM PART OF THE US STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND. THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT INVOLVED IS TEN, AND THE REDEPLOYMENT WILL ALLOW BETTER MANAGEMENT OF THE USAF AERIAL REFUELLING RESOURCES IN EUROPE.'

"THE PRESS OFFICER WOULD BE BRIEFED, AS NECESSARY, ON THE FOLLOWING DETAILED POINTS:

- (A) NUMBER OF MILITARY PERSONNEL INVOLVED;
- (B) NUMBER OF DEPENDANTS;
- (C) EXTRA BUILDINGS AT MILDENHALL;
- (D) DESCRIPTION OF AIRCRAFT;
- (E) LOCAL FIRE HAZARD DUE TO ACCIDENT;
- (F) FUTURE OF 98TH STRATEGIC WING.

"THE FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED DRAFT ANSWERS TO TWO OTHER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, IF PUT:

"Q. WHAT ROLE PERFORMED BY AIRCRAFT REFUELLED BY KC-L35S?

A. THE KC-135 ARE EQUIPPED TO REFUEL A WIDE RANGE OF US AIRCRAFT TYPES, SUCH AS COMBAT FIGHTERS' BOMBERS, RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT, AND AIRCRAFT TAKING PART IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS.

"Q. CONNECTION WITH SPAIN?

A. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THE REDEPLOYMENT OF THESE AIRCRAFT WHICH ARE AT PRESENT IN A PLACE CALLED TORREJON, SPAIN: TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF USAF RESOURCES GENERALLY (AS EXPLAINED); TO MOVE THE TANKER AIRCRAFT CLOSER TO THE AIRCRAFT THEY NORMALLY REFUEL; KC-135 AIRCRAFT AT TORREJON ARE BEING RELOCATED AT ZARAGOZA AIRBASE, SPAIN AND TO MILDENHALL; THE REDEPLOYMENT ALSO EASES AIR TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THE MADRID AREAQ

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3. ON THE MATTER OF TIMING, WILBERFORCE SAID THE DEFENSIVE PRESS BRIEF "HAD NOT YET BEEN CLEARED" BY MINISTERS AND HENCE HE COULD NOT GIVE FORMAL GO-AHEAD TODAY BUT PROMISED WORD NLT 8 SEPTEMBER. WILBERFORCE NOTED THAT OUR PROPOSED LINE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE ON THE "NOT UNRELATED 306 STRATEGIC WING" IS DEFENSIVE AND HENCE HMG IS "QUITE CONTENT" WITH THE LINE.

4. FINALLY, WILBERFORCE SAID HE IS OBLIGED TO NOTE THAT THE PROCEDURE FOR CLEARING THE KC-135 TANKER AUGMENTATION WAS "NOT PROPERLY HANDLED" IN WHITEHALL AND THAT MOD HAD GIVEN CLEARANCE WITHOUT FCO APPROVAL -- A MATTER SUBSEQUENTLY RECTIFIED BETWEEN THE TWO DEPARTMENTS.

5. ALLUDING TO FCO DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY SYKES' DISCUSSION ON 1 SEPTEMBER WITH ACTING CHIEF OF POLITICAL SECRET

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TION (BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL), WILBERFORCE STRESSED IMPORTANCE THAT ALL REQUESTS FOR DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCES -- PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVING MATTERS LIKELY TO HAVE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY -- BE INTRODUCED INTO HMG THROUGH FCO. STRESSING THAT HE WAS NOT MAKING "A COMPLAINT" AND THAT FCO DOES NOT DESIRE TO IMPEDE DIRECT "SERVICE-TO-SERVICE" DEALINGS, HE WISHED MERELY TO AVOID FUTURE CONFUSION WHICH COULD BE CAUSED BY UNCOORDINATED CLEARANCES.

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